

Nixon in Crisis: A Joyless Fighter

By Marquis Childs

LOS ANGELES—Seldom, in the annals of American politics has a document so self-revealing as Nixon's *Six Crises* been published. It is an intensely personal account of six encounters with the dragon.

The dragon wears many faces. It is the American press and in particular certain sections of the press. It is the Democratic party. It is communism and Premier Khrushchev. But in each account the dragon if not slain is shown up for the wicked, unfair, reprehensible creature that it is.

But, above all, the book is important for its revelation of the Nixon character. The word tension recurs again and again in each of the six chapters. The man each time seems to have been under an intolerable strain. That is the tragedy—and the triumph—that behind the fixed gaze, the face of the ambitious, hopeful American he presents to the world, he should have suffered so greatly.

The book, which he carefully says is not a memoir, confirms the impression that he is a comparatively new type in our political life. If there was any joy in battle, as in the hearty jousting with a variety of dragons of Theodore Roosevelt, it is not here.

IT IS perhaps significant that one of the few persons for whom Nixon expresses unqualified respect and praise is Thomas E. Dewey, former Governor of New York and twice defeated candidate for President. They have much in common, Dewey being in a sense Nixon's political progenitor.

One of the most interesting relationships, as the author recounts the Hiss case, the private fund controversy in the 1952 campaign, the Eisenhower heart attack, the Caracas stoning, the encounter with Khrushchev and the 1960 campaign, is that with the President under whom he served. Nixon pays Eisenhower full tribute as hero and as chief executive. But between the lines it is evident that Eisenhower's indecision and indifference, particularly after the revelation of the fund which his business supporters made available to him while he was Senator, were hard to take.

At one point he says that Eisenhower "was a far more complex and devious man than most people realized" and adds "in the best sense of those words."

In the early months of 1956 when he could not be sure whether the President wanted him on the ticket or not Nixon says he went through "another period of agonizing indecision" which took "a heavy toll mentally, physically and emotionally."

Nixon's book appears as he starts his active campaign for the governorship first in the primary and, with his nomination believed to be assured, pointed up to the election in November.

HIS CHIEF charge against President Kennedy is that in the 1960 campaign Kennedy was briefed privately on the training of volunteers for an invasion of Cuba and yet rebuked the Eisenhower Administration for not taking action against Castro. Although Allen Dulles, head of the CIA at the time the candidates were briefed, denies that this was so, Nixon nevertheless sticks to the charge in a footnote in a second edition of his book.

The Nixon strategy in the contest for the governorship is obviously to expand on his national reputation, and the book will serve that end. Even if coldly and objectively it might be the wiser course to keep within the confines of California, he would probably find it hard not to run against the President. This is a return engagement at the state level with Gov. Edmund G. Brown as a stand-in for the President.

There emerges from *Six Crises* Nixon's sense of injury and hurt. He resents the wealth of those who opposed him, Nelson Rockefeller, the Kennedys, and in one of his few generalizations he notes that the time may have come when only those with private riches can run for high public office. But, as though to show that the gap can be narrowed, he says that in his first year in private life from the law, his syndicated column and his book, his income will be greater than his entire government salary for the 14 years he was in Washington. His salary as Vice President was \$35,000 a year and in Congress \$22,500.

In his acceptance speech when he was nominated by the Republicans in 1960 Nixon said, "I believe in the American dream because I have seen it come true in my own life." He has now made it abundantly clear how much it cost to realize that dream.